



MIAMI BEACH

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Staying in Touch with Special Needs Residents *-- Miami Beach Launches Telephone Reassurance Program --*

Miami Beach, FL -- During an emergency, such as a hurricane, it can be especially frightening for the elderly and for those that require special living needs. The City of Miami Beach currently has 172 registered residents that require special needs during an emergency. Special needs residents are those who on a daily basis require skilled nursing care, assistance with daily living, or have life-saving medical equipment dependent on electricity.

In an effort to provide reassurance and a sense of security for Miami Beach special needs residents, the City of Miami Beach recently initiated a Telephone Reassurance Program. Special needs individuals are paired with a City of Miami Beach Answer Center "buddy" who is responsible for calling that individual monthly to check on their safety and well-being. The "buddy" is also that person's contact if they need assistance between calls.

The "special needs" resident and the "buddy" set a date and time each month that is convenient for both and ensures contact is made. If the "buddy" is unable to reach the special needs or elderly person by telephone, the "buddy" will contact emergency medical services and/or a person designated by the elderly or special needs person. Additionally, if necessary, the City's "buddy" will make the appropriate referrals to the City's Office of Community Services.

"These services are usually provided by private companies for over \$25 per month. In an effort to better serve all of our diverse residents, this service is being offered for free," said Vivian Guzman, director, Neighborhood Services Department.

Remember the special needs of your family members this hurricane season. Infants, the elderly and persons with disabilities need a little more preparation to be ready for an emergency. If you know of a resident that requires special needs, please have them register with the Miami-Dade County Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program (EEAP) at 305.468.5900. For more information on the Telephone Reassurance Program, please call 305-604-CITY (2489) or www.miamibeachfl.gov.

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